

REMARKS

The specification has been amended to correct errors of a typographical and grammatical nature. Due to the excessive corrections thereto, applicants submit herewith a Substitute Specification, along with a marked-up copy of the original specification for the Examiner's convenience. Applicants submit that the Substitute Specification includes no new matter. Therefore, entry of the Substitute Specification is respectfully requested.

The abstract has been amended to correct errors of a grammatical nature. A copy of the marked-up abstract is also enclosed.

Entry of the preliminary amendments and examination of the application is respectfully requested.

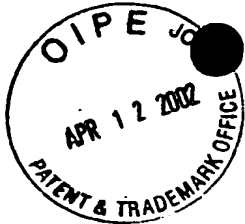
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PATTERN INSPECTION METHOD AND SYSTEM THEREFOR

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

[1. Field of the Invention]

The present invention is related to a [manufacturing] ^{the manufacture of} system for a substrate having a circuit pattern, such as a semiconductor device or liquid crystal display[]; and, more particularly, ^{the invention relates} to [the] technology for inspecting a substrate pattern during fabrication.

[2. Description of the Related Art]

Conventional optical or electron beam pattern inspection systems are described in Japanese Patent Laid-open No. H5-258703 and Japanese Patent Laid-open No. H11-160247.

Fig. 1 shows the constitution ^{of a system} disclosed in Japanese Patent Laid-open No. H5-258703 as an example of an electron beam pattern inspection system. ^{In this system,} an electron beam 2 from an electron beam source 1 is deflected in the X direction by a deflector 3[] and is irradiated onto a target substrate 5 via an object lens 4, while a stage 6 is simultaneously [made to] move ^{and} continuously in the Y direction, [and a] Secondary electrons 7 from the target substrate 5 [is] ^{are} detected by a detector 8, ^{and} the detected signal is converted from analog to digital by an analog-to-digital (A/D) converter 9[] ^{to form} and, as] a digital image, ^{which} is compared [by] ⁱⁿ an image processing circuit 10

to a digital image of a place that can be expected to be the same as the original. A place that differs is detected as a pattern defect 11, and the location of the defect is established.

Fig. 2 shows the constitution ^{of the system} disclosed in Japanese Patent Laid-open No. H11-160247 as an example of an optical inspection system. ^{In this system,} A light from a light source 21 is irradiated onto a target substrate 5 via an object lens 22, and [a] reflected light is detected by an image sensor 23 at that time. By repeatedly detecting the reflected light while a stage 6 moves at a constant speed, an image is detected as a detected image 24, and ^{this image 24 is} stored in memory 25. |Th^e detected image 24| is compared ^{with} [against] a memory ~~26~~ - stored image 27, which can be expected to ^{have} [be] the same pattern as the detected image 24, and if the patterns are identical, the detected image 24 is determined to be a normal portion. ^{However,} but if the patterns differ, this difference is detected as a pattern defect 11, and the defect location is established.

As an example, Fig. 3 shows a layout of ^{a wafer 31 which represents} [when] a target substrate 5 [is a wafer 31]. Dies 32, which are ultimately cut apart to yield individual products of the same variety, are formed on wafer 31. Stage 6 is moved along a scanning line 33, and an image of the stripe region 34 is detected.

When the present detection location A is^{at} 35, an image of detection location B 36 in memory 25 is extracted as a stored image 27, and the two images are compared. Thereby, detection location A 35 is compared against a pattern that can be expected to be an identical pattern. Here, memory 25 possesses^a capacity capable of holding an image that can be expected to be an identical pattern, that is used repeatedly in a ring shape to form an actual circuit.

In^{the} case of ~~(the)~~ both inspection systems, to confirm the results of the inspection, the inspected data ~~(was)~~^{is} outputted to a review system. Thereafter, the wafer ~~(was)~~^{is} transferred to and set on a table of the review system to review defects detected by the inspection system. In the review system, the defect to be reviewed ~~(was)~~^{is} placed in a viewing field of the review system by using the inspected data outputted from the inspection system. Then, ~~(visually observing)~~^{is visually observed} the image^{has} to judge^e whether or not it ~~(was)~~^{has} an actual defect or to infer what could have caused it. In ~~(these)~~^{such a} reviewing method, a vast amount^{is} of image data acquired ~~(by)~~^{is} the inspection ~~(were)~~^{is} not effectively used.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

The present invention is constituted such that an image of a defect portion, which is similar to an image of a defect portion specified on the basis of inspection results

outputted by an inspection system, and the defect portion image data thereof, is retrieved, and the conditions for the occurrence of a specific mode defect, which, ^{have} occurred in the past, can be ^{identified} grasped, by displaying the retrieval results, so as to enable identification.

A first ^{system} [Constitution] according to the present invention will be explained. A constitution ^{of a system} that uses an electron beam will be ^{considered} shown here, but ^{this} (it) is substantially identical to a ^{system} constitution, which utilizes another ^{type of} charged particle. ^{As seen in} Fig. 4, ^{the system} shows the constitution. It is constituted from an electron beam source 1 for generating an electron beam 2; [and] a deflector 3 for deflecting ^{the} electron beam 2; [and] an object lens 4 for converging ^{the} electron beam 2 onto a target substrate 5; and a stage 6 for holding, scanning and positioning ^{the} target substrate 5; and ^{is provided} a detector 8 for detecting (a) secondary electrons ^{emitted} 7 from target substrate 5; and, an A/D converter 9 ^{operates to} convert ~~into~~ a detected signal from analog to digital [and] ^{to} form ~~into~~ a digital image; and, An image processing circuit 110 ^{operates to} compare ^{es} the digital image against a digital image of a location that can be expected to be substantially identical[,] and detect ^s ~~the~~ a location that is different as a pattern defect 11; and, ^{operates to} Defect data storing means 201 ^{for} storing ~~the~~ defect data 200 comprising the defect location and image data of ^{the} pattern defect 11; and data

outputting means 203 ^{the} [for] output ^{the} ~~will be~~ stored defect data 202
 to either a network or a storage medium; and ^{an} inputting means
 205 ^{is provided} for inputting [a] defect data 202 related to a plurality
 of wafers, which was outputted to data transferring means
 204 by data outputting means 203; and, defect data storing
 means 206 ^{ES} [for] storing ^{the} inputted defect data; and, ^{the} a defect map
 207 ^{operates to} [for] display ~~the~~ defect location data of the wafer on a
 display screen, and selecting means 208 ^{the} [for] select ~~the~~ a
 specific defect on the defect map 207; and, Image displaying
 means 209 ^{the} [for] display ~~the~~ image [data] of ^{the} selected defect data
 in an image format; ^{is provided} Search command means 210 ^{is provided} for issuing a
 command for retrieving, from the defect data group, a defect
 image that is similar to a displayed image; and image
 retrieving means 211 ^{operates to retrieve} [for retrieving] an image having image
 data that is similar to a displayed image.

^{the} Electron beam 2 from electron beam source 1 is
 irradiated onto target substrate 5 via object lens 4, and
 generated secondary electrons 7 ^{are} ^{the} [is] detected by detector 8. ^{In this operation, the}
^{the} Electron beam 1 is deflected by deflector 3, image data is
 formed by ^{moving} [using] stage 6 ^{to} ^{the} [for] scanning target substrate 5, and
^{detected by detector 8} the image data ^{is} is converted from analog to digital by A/D
 converter 9, ^{so that} [and] a digital image is formed. Image
 processing circuit 110 compares this digital image with a
 digital image which is expected to be substantially

identical, and detects a difference between the two images as a pattern defect 11. Defect data 200, comprising the defect location and image data of ^{the} detected pattern defect 11, is stored in defect data storing means 201, and ^{the} stored defect data 202 is outputted by data outputting means 203 as necessary to information transferring means 204 ^{in the form} of either a network or a storage medium.

Defect data 202 of a plurality of wafers, which is outputted from outputting means 203, is inputted by inputting means 205 and is stored in a storing means 206, and the defect location data of the inputted defect data is displayed ^{on} (in) defect map 207. When a specific defect on the defect map is selected by selecting means 208, an image of the selected specific defect is displayed on image displaying means 209. When a command is issued by search command means 210, a defect image similar to the displayed image is retrieved from among the stored defect data stored in the storing means 206 by image retrieving means 211, and the retrieval results are reflected in defect map 207. Retrieval results can be checked as needed by issuing a command via selecting means 208. The frequency at which similar defects occur can be checked by displaying, in the time-series format shown in Fig. 5, a display format of

defect map 207. In accordance therewith, the image data acquired at inspection time can be utilized effectively.

These and other objects, features and advantages of the invention will be apparent from the following more particular description of preferred embodiments of the invention, as illustrated in the accompanying drawings.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

Fig. 1 is a ^{schematic diagram} [front view] showing a simplified constitution of a conventional electron beam-type pattern inspection system;

Fig. 2 is a ^{schematic diagram} [front view] showing a simplified constitution of a conventional optical-type pattern inspection system;

Fig. 3 is a plan view showing a wafer layout;

Fig. 4 is a ^{schematic} block diagram showing a simplified constitution of solution means of the present invention;

Fig. 5 is a graph showing ^{an example of the} occurrence frequency trends of defects;

Fig. 6 is a [block] diagram showing the overall constitution of a pattern inspection system according to the present invention;

Fig. 7 is a ^{schematic diagram} [front view] showing a simplified constitution of an inspection system according to the present invention; and

Fig. 8 is a ^{diagram} [front view] of a display screen showing an example of a [display screen of a] results confirmation system according to the present invention.

DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENTS

The embodiments of the present invention will be explained hereinbelow using specific figures. The overall system will be explained first, and then the respective parts of the system will be explained.

(Overall System)

The constitution of (the) ^a first embodiment ^{of the present invention} is shown in Fig. 6. This first embodiment is constituted from a server 151, which is arranged on a network 150[,] and which manages and stores various information; [and] an SEM (scanning electron microscope)-type pattern inspection system, an optical-type pattern inspection system, an extraneous material inspection system, a length-measuring SEM, and other such inspection systems A 152 and inspection systems B 153, which treat a target substrate 5 as an object, and inspect patterns and measure dimensions; a review system 154 for receiving inspection results from inspection system A 152 and inspection system B 153, ^{for} positioning target substrate 5 at a specified defect location, and ^{for} visually checking this specified defect; and a defect checking system 155 for receiving and checking either inspection or

measurement data at inspection time. The respective parts satisfy their functionality by operating as described hereinbelow.

That is, a target substrate [5] is loaded, and either a pattern inspection or an extraneous material inspection is carried out, or pattern dimensions are measured by inspection system A 152 and inspection system B 153. Measurement results [160], together with image data [161] of defective parts and measured portions are stored when inspection and measurement are performed, and ^{the} measurement results [160] and image data [161] are outputted over network 150. ^{is} These data ^{at} (are) stored in server 151 ^{at} one time.

Information of the measurement results [160] and image data [161] of a plurality of target substrate [5] stored in server 151 is transmitted to defect review system 154, and measurement results [160] are displayed on defect confirmation system 155. Based on the displayed results, image data [161] of a defective portion, which is similar to the image of a specific defect, is retrieved using a method[,] which will be explained hereinbelow, and the retrieval results are reflected on a display.

A first variation of this embodiment will be explained. That is, instead of executing a search via a defect checking system 155, a search can be executed via either inspection

system A 152, or inspection system B 153, or server 151, or review system 154. Or, instead of the checking system 155, a search server 156, which is connected to the network 150, is provided, [and] a search is executed by the search server 156, and only the results are displayed via a system other than defect checking system 155 or search server 156. Further, a search can be executed by an arbitrary system without the need to provide search server 156 independently.

(Inspection System)

The constitution of a SEM-type pattern inspection system is shown in Fig. 7. This ^{system} [constitution] comprises an electron beam source 1 ^{having an electron gun} for generating an electron beam 2; and an electron optical system 64 [having an electron gun] for accelerating and extracting ^{the} [an] electron beam 2 from electron beam source 1 by means of an electrode, and which ^{es} creates a virtual light source in a fixed location by means of an electrostatic or magnetic field superimposed lens. ^{the electron optical system 64 includes} a condenser lens 60 for converging ^{the} [an] electron beam 2 from ^{the} virtual light source [40] in a fixed location; a blanking plate 104, which is set near the convergence location, and which ^{effects} [controls the] ON/OFF ^{control} of ^{the} [an] electron beam 2 ^{emitted} from ^{the} electron gun; a deflector 105 for deflecting an electron beam 2 in [the] XY directions; and an object lens 4 for converging ^{the} [an] electron beam 2 onto a target substrate 5 [and].

is evacuated
 A sample chamber 107₁ for maintaining a wafer 31, which is *the*
 target substrate 5, in a vacuum; a stage 6, on which *(is)*
is mounted *is located in the sample chamber 107, and*
 (mounted) the wafer 31, [and to which is applied] a retarding
is applied thereto
 voltage 108₁ for making it possible to detect an image of an
 arbitrary location; and *A* detector 8 [for] detect ~~ing~~ *(a)* secondary
emitted *an* *is provided*
 electrons 7₁ from target substrate 5; and A/D converter 9₁ for
 converting [a detected] *A* signal detected by detector 8 from
 analog to digital and producing a digital image; and *A* memory
is connected to the A/D converter 9 *the*
 109₁ for storing (a) digital image; and an image processing
operates to *data*
 circuit 110 [for] compar ~~ing~~ *(a)* stored image stored in memory
to
 109 with an A/D converted digital image [.] and, detect ~~ing~~ *the*
 difference between the compared [two] images as a pattern
 defect 11; and *A* pattern defect storage portion 201₁ *is provided*
 for storing defect data 200, such as pattern defect 11
 coordinates, projected length, area, critical threshold
 value DD (the threshold value at which, when the threshold
 value is lower than this value, a defect is detected),
 differential image average value, differential image
 distribution, maximum image difference, defect image texture,
 reference image texture, image of a defect portion, and a
 reference image having a pattern that is identical to that
 of the defect portion; and *is connected to the pattern defect storage*
portion 201
 Data outputting means 203₁ for
 outputting stored defect data 200 to either a network or a
is provided
 storage medium; and *A* system controller 100₁ for controlling

the entire system (control lines from system controller 100
 are omitted from the figure); and ^{a display unit is connected to the system controller 100.} an operating screen 45 for ^{The display unit includes}
 performing various operations, ^a and a keyboard (not shown), ^a
 mouse (not shown) and ^a knob (not shown) for specifying
 operations; and ^{is provided} a Z sensor 113 ^{is provided} for maintaining the focal
 point position of a detected digital image constant by
 measuring the height of a wafer 31[]] and adding and
 controlling an offset 112 to the current value of object
 lens 4; and ^{is provided} a loader (not shown) ^{is provided} for loading and unloading
 wafers 31 ^{carried in} [inside] a cassette 114 into sample chamber 107; and
 an orientation flat detector [117] (not shown) ^{is provided} for positioning
 the wafer 31 using the outline shape of ^{the} a wafer 31 as a
 reference; and ^{is provided} an optical microscope 118 ^{is provided} for observing a
 pattern on the wafer 31; and a standard sample 119[]] which[]] is
 provided on stage 6.

The operation of the inspection system will be
 explained. When an inspection is started by a command from
 a user, stage 6 moves and the region to-be-inspected ^{on} [of] the
 wafer 31 mounted on the stage 6 is ^{moved} to the scanning start
 position. A wafer-specific offset measured beforehand is
 added and set in offset 112, Z sensor 113 is made operative,
 stage 6 scans in the Y direction along scanning line 33
 shown in Fig. 3, deflector 105 scans in the X direction in
 synchronization with the scan of the stage, the voltage of

blanking plate 104 is shut off at ^{the} effective scanning time, and an electron beam 2 is irradiated onto ^{the} wafer 31 and scanning is performed. Either (a) reflected electrons or (a) secondary electrons generated from wafer 31 ^{are} detected by detector 8, a digital image of stripe region 34 is produced by A/D converter 9, ^{this digital image is} and then stored in memory 109 and inputted in image processing circuit 110 in parallel. Upon termination of the scan of stage 6, Z sensor ¹¹³ (54) is made inoperative.

An inspection of all required regions is ^{carried out} (done) by repeating the scan ¹¹⁹ of the stage 6. When the detection is carried out in the location A 35 (Refer to Fig. 3), image processing circuit 110 compares a detected image of the location A 35 with an image of detection location B 36 (Refer to Fig. 3) stored in memory 109, and extracts a discrepancy between both images as a pattern defect 11, and (stores) the image of detection location A 36 ^{is stored} in defect data storage means 201. Defect data 200, such as extracted pattern defect 11 coordinates, projected length, area, critical threshold value DD (the threshold value at which, when the threshold value is lower than this value, a defect is detected), differential image average value, differential image distribution, maximum image difference, defect image texture, reference image texture, and image data, is stored

in defect data storage means 201. And, from data outputting means 203, ^{data} is outputted as needed to data transferring means 204, which is either a network or an MO (magneto-optical disk), CDR (compact disk - recordable), DVD (digital video disk), FD (floppy disk) or other storage medium.

(Results Confirmation System)

Outputted defect data 202 is inputted via inputting means 205 ^(See Fig 4) of results confirmation system 155 either via a network or from a storage medium, and defect location data from among the inputted defect data is displayed on defect map 207. When a specific item on the defect map is selected by selecting means 208, image data of the defect data is displayed in ^{an} image format on image displaying means 209. When a command is issued by search command means 210, a defect image similar to the display image is retrieved by image retrieving means 211 from among the defect data group, and retrieval results are reflected on defect map 207. Retrieval results can be checked as needed by issuing a command via selecting means 208. The frequency at which similar defects occur can be checked by displaying, in the time-series format shown in Fig. 5, a display format of ^{the} defect map 207. In accordance therewith, the image data acquired at inspection time can be utilized effectively.

~~the~~
An example of a display screen of ~~the~~ results confirmation system 155 is shown in Fig. 8. The location on a substrate (wafer) of each detected defect is displayed on map display portion 55, which corresponds to defect map 207 of Fig. 4.

Further, an image of a defect specified from among the defects displayed on the map display portion ⁵⁵ is displayed on image display portion 56, which corresponds to image displaying means 209 of Fig. 4. Specifying a defect for displaying this image is ^{affected} ~~done~~ by operating a mouse operation command button 140. That is, a current location symbol 59 is displayed on the screen ~~by~~ using the mouse operation command button 140 to select ^a ~~the~~ selection mode 145 from among a selection mode 145 and a zooming mode 146, the current location display 59 is moved with the mouse (not shown in the figure), and the image of a defect that a user wishes to see is displayed on image display portion 56 by clicking on the location of the defect to be viewed.

Further, when the zooming mode 146 is selected with the mouse operation command button 140, a display on map display portion 55 of the distribution of defects on a substrate can be either enlarged or reduced.

According to the present invention, an image of a defect portion, which is similar to an image of a defect portion specified on the basis of inspection results

outputted by an inspection system and the defect portion image data thereof, is retrieved, and the conditions for the occurrence of a specific mode defect, which occurred in the past, can be ^{identified} [grasped] by displaying the retrieval results so as to enable identification. Further, the present invention is characterized in that it enables the provision of functions for sounding an alarm in response to a future specific mode-generated defect by setting retrieval conditions in the inspection system.

The invention may be embodied in other specific forms without departing from the spirit or essential characteristics thereof. The present embodiment is therefore to be considered in all respects as illustrative and not restrictive, the scope of the invention being indicated by the appended claims rather than by the foregoing description, and all changes which come within the meaning and range of equivalency of the claims are therefore intended to be embraced therein.

ABSTRACT OF THE DISCLOSURE

Conventionally, defect data outputted by an inspection system comprised only characteristic quantitative data, such as coordinate data, area, and projected length, and only the coordinate data for moving to a defect location could be utilized effectively. By contrast, (the present invention,) by using image data in addition to characteristic quantitative data as the defect data for an inspection system, [enables] the retrieval of image data via an outside results confirmation system. ^{is made possible} Further, (in the case of) ^{for} defect data of a plurality of substrates, it is ^{possible} [enabled] to display a defect image during inspection by the fact that similar defects are retrieved via images and retrieval results are displayed as trends ^{, which} makes it possible to display a defect image during inspection by searching similar defects on images and displaying them as a trend, ^{and} designating a substrate on the trend, thereby displaying the defect map thereof and designating a defect on the defect map.